

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, December 1, 2014, for the purpose of discussing the University Square basketball courts.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:00 p.m. The meeting was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; David Moran, Assistant City Manager; and Captain Tom Kemp and Acting Lieutenant Gordon Pracht, Greenbelt Police Department.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Carl Schurg, Suzanne Holt and Patrick May, Lerner Corporation; Bob and Betty Sonneveldt, Laura Kressler, Bill Orleans and Kathleen Gallagher, News Review.

Ms. Holt stated there were 495 units at University Square. She described renovations underway including new light and plumbing fixtures, new kitchens, washers and dryers in each unit and new carpet.

Mayor Jordan asked about the percentage of college students living at the complex. Ms. Holt responded it was less than in the past. Mr. Schurg estimated the percentage at 20-25%.

Ms. Pope asked how many units had been renovated. Ms. Holt stated about 30% of the units. Ms. Pope asked about rent increases for renovated units. Mr. Schurg responded there was a \$125 increase.

Ms. Davis asked about the occupancy rate. Ms. Holt responded they were at about 95% occupancy. She indicated that turnover was around 28% which was low.

Mr. Putens asked about security at the complex. Ms. Holt responded that security had not been a problem.

Ms. Mach reported a complaint last winter about snow removal on sidewalks along Westway, particularly students waiting for a bus with no place to stand. Ms. Holt stated that on-site staff work to open all sidewalks as quickly as possible.

Mayor Jordan asked if they had any issues with City services. Mr. Schurg responded no and indicated that the last City inspection only had identified a small number of items.

Ms. Davis relayed a concern by a resident who had bed bugs. Ms. Holt indicated that residents are inconvenienced by the procedures and work involved in dealing with bed bugs.

Mayor Jordan stated that a major reason for the work session was complaints about noise from the basketball court. Mr. Putens stated that the problem had occurred before and seemed to be getting worse.

Ms. Holt stated that they had not received any complaints about the court and were surprised to get the City's September 12 letter. Ms. Sonneveldt indicated that she wrote her first letter to Lerner in 2002 and this had been an ongoing problem. She reported she noticed it more this past summer because she had been in town. It was noted that in response to past concerns, University Square no longer rented out the adjacent party room and now it was a fitness center.

Captain Kemp stated that incidents flared up in the summer. He reported there had been 2 arrests. Captain Kemp indicated that the City's Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system has been programmed to dispatch officers to do checks in the area and this was being done. Acting Lt. Pracht explained that the CAD generated calls had occurred late in the evening.

Ms. Davis observed that the current fence does not surround the basketball court. She suggested an enclosed area that could be locked. Ms. Holt responded they would consider this.

Mr. Roberts expressed the need for a solution to solve the problem. He suggested relocating the court or putting up a sound wall. Mr. Schurg responded there was not another site on the property that could accommodate a basketball court.

Ms. Mach agreed with the need for a fence around the basketball court that could be locked when the court was closed.

Mr. Herling asked about police presence at the basketball court. Captain Kemp responded that there was an officer living at the complex who acts as a liaison. There is also the beat officer who checks the area while patrolling. Mr. Herling asked about noise violations. Captain Kemp indicated that issuing noise violation citations was another tool that could be used.

Mayor Jordan noted the presence of a parked police cruiser in the area. Captain Kemp responded this was another tool the Police had used.

Ms. Davis agreed that Lerner needed to erect a fence around the court. She suggested the City and University Square's security service work together on this issue, especially during warm months. Ms. Davis suggested that management notify parents when youth are causing problems at the court. Ms. Holt agreed this could be done.

Mayor Jordan asked about Lerner's policy for dealing with noisy tenants. Mr. May responded that these complaints were difficult to enforce in Landlord Tenant court.

Ms. Pope stated that she sees Greenbelt Police regularly in the community. She indicated that Lerner had a responsibility to address this situation. Ms. Pope asked when the City could get a response about the fence request. Ms. Holt stated they could provide the City some kind of answer regarding the fence by the end of the week.

Mr. Putens described problems that had occurred in Windsor Green with non-residents using the basketball court there which ultimately led to removal of the hoops. He favored more use of municipal infractions for noise violations.

Ms. Mach asked about how much knowledge University Square residents had about City Recreation opportunities. Ms. Holt responded the community did not have a newsletter, but could send an email blast to their residents.

Mr. Herling stressed the value of the News Review and asked how it was delivered to University Square residents. It was noted the News Review was available online. Mr. May indicated they could email blast a link to the News Review.

Mayor Jordan asked about the apartment market in Greenbelt and how it was impacted by new development. Ms. Holt responded that their competition was other complexes on Greenbelt Road. She stated it was a good place to live.

Ms. Davis asked if there was a University Square website. She suggested it include links to the City website.

Mayor Jordan stated his hope that we didn't have to come back to this again in the summer. Mr. Roberts favored something happening. Both agreed that they didn't want to see recreation facilities eliminated.

Ms. Sonneveld stated that they liked seeing kids play basketball. She stated the problem was the late night noise being generated and the vulgar language being used.

Ms. Kressler stated this was a difficult problem, but agreed the fence was a good idea.

Mayor Jordan thanked everyone for coming.

Informational Items

Mr. McLaughlin noted the PGCMA Legislative Dinner on December 2. He also referenced the petition from Pat McAndrew and Council requested an Executive Session to discuss it and agreed to set this at the next Regular Meeting.

Council Reports

Ms. Mach reported on the National League of Cities (NLC) Conference. She referenced the policy changes adopted by the Human Development Committee. Ms. Mach discussed some of the sessions she had attended.

Ms. Davis announced it was NLC's 90th Anniversary. She referenced the NLC survey results that determined the major issues for next year. Ms. Davis reported on the workshops she had attended.

The meeting ended at 9:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*David E. Moran
Assistant City Manager*